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Review: Ric Evans

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entirely foregone the diptych presentation; now, however, smaller images gravitate on a central element. The exercise allows for synchrony and balance. Besides the play of couplings and their emphasized rhetorical effect, one finds works that seek to capture the *genus loci*, the spirit of the place, the particular mood or aura emanating from the pictured venues. This time, Benoît targets the Supreme Court of Canada and the Palais de Justice in Paris. It is clear from the images that the artist has spent time in these places and wandered through them.

In the central image, heavy armchairs set in a half-circle (and encircling similarly arranged tables) appear as the protagonists in the Parisian court, while light enters the room through a single window to enhance the furniture's patina. A second image, taller than it is wide, shows bright, round multicoloured glass marbles hurtling in from the side of the frame shared with the first image. The marbles' movement shows up as bright streaks of light. Evoking lucidity, luck and chance, the marbles subvert the stilted atmosphere of the courtroom and the meticulous, rational labour of the judges who sit there, charged with eschewing all ambiguity in their decisions, which are to be based, in theory, on the unyielding logic of cause, effect and precedent. The marbles' motion is based on chance, which creates a striking opposition between the desire to seek meaning in human actions (through reason and judgement) and a mad rush of events that is governed by no rational oversight. Other, smaller images in the exhibition that ring the large image are just as subtly marked by the photographer's intrusions. In one, open files and papers spilling out over each other are the indicators of human presence—the unwieldy papers of lawyers, plaintiffs and defendants.

The artist's presence is so lightly marked we don't quite know what to make of it. In a 1994 catalogue text, Marie Perrault addressed this aspect of Benoît's work, suggesting that it occupies a place of intentional hesitation between the theatricalization of decor elements and an acknowledgement of the true functions of the chosen settings. It is as if his photographs defy the inescapable precedent of the real while creating another reality—a precedent about which justice has nothing to say. SYLVAIN CAMPEAU

Ric Evans

◀◀ SABLE-CASTELLI GALLERY, TORONTO

One could describe Ric Evans's paintings as paintings about painting, an ongoing study of the conventions of geometric abstraction. His latest body of work, *The Salt Paintings*, reaffirms these formalist aesthetics.

The works exude the richness, depth and sheen of oil paintings and present their viewer with unexpected passages of texture, colour and ironic spatial depth. While they might lie within the parameters of geometric formalism, the paintings demand more than didactic contemplation of abstract composition. Their tension is based on an antagonistic relationship between perception and illusion, and the viewer is left with an impression of visual lyricism and physical sensuality. The strength of the work lies in the dichotomy between the intellectual posturing of theoretical abstraction and the physical sensuality of the actual canvases.

Hard-edge painting is more directly referenced in the work than gestural or expressionist painting styles, but the canvases are not "flat." They explore contrasting textures that create a diversity of surface elements. The use of rollers and palette knives gives the canvases a dry opacity that contrasts with the luminous effects of gestured paintbrush marks. Lines are drawn as scratched impressions in the paint, or as raised masking-taped edges. These marks project a sensual presence that materializes the hand of the artist.

Visual deception and lyricism go hand in hand in the paintings. While their geometric shapes appear to reference natural forms, the painted shapes are tenuous and elude any precise recognition. Paint drips partially obscure the foregrounded lines of the compositions, setting up confusions between figure and ground. Painted pinstripes break up the surface. The compositions and use of colour play on symmetry so that the viewer is



RIC EVANS *Stored Memory* 2003 Oil on canvas 61 x 61 cm

Wordless Realization 2003 Oil on canvas 61 x 61 cm



JERRY PETHICK
1935–2003



FLIGHT POSTER 1910. THE START OF EXTENDED FLIGHT AND JOURNEYS

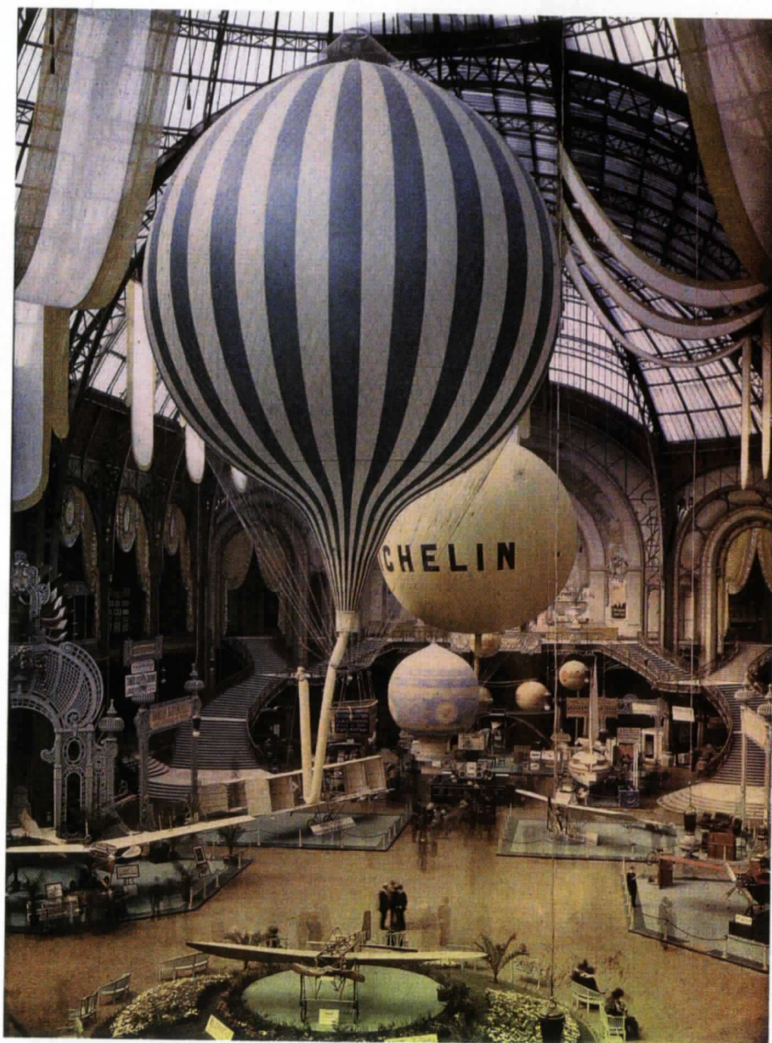
And Then

◀◀ THE PRINTING at the bottom of these colour photocopies is Jerry Pethick's; he annotated these early aviation images to serve as illustrations for an essay called "Triple Traverse" that he wrote last winter. The essay was about the Wright Brothers, their first powered flight at Kitty Hawk and its connection to the early 20th-century avant-garde work of Kandinsky, Duchamp and Léger. It was just one of a number of essays he had written for a book he wanted to call *Theoretical Real: Hardwiring History*. Writing is what Jerry did when he wasn't making sculpture, and, like his sculpture, it was always inventive, always pushing past the conventions of received opinion. Pethick's art-history forays were not academic. They were speculative projects, busy with how real things could spark imagination. He wrote like an artist—content came first, and the job was to see how far you could take it. He was already familiar with flight. It is what he called thinking, and he did it every day of his now cut-short life.

RICHARD RHODES

drawn into the paintings by a sense of equivalence that, on closer inspection, proves false. Colour is intuitive, rather than matching direct references to representational imagery or its cultural codes.

Commenting on his latest work, Evans says, "It's not what you do, it's what you don't do that makes a painting interesting." His concern is for the observer to approach the paintings as objects, objects with unexpected and ironic compositional passages that then present an experiential confrontation. From that experience, he creates a discourse that is as sensual as it is intellectual. SARAH NIND



1909 AIR SHOW - PHOTO LEON GIMBEL



JERRY PETHICK
Volklingen Scarab 1995
Aluminum, stainless steel,
plywood, photographs, Fresnel
lenses, glass, fluorescent fixture,
SpectraFoil, silicon
2.45 x 2.1 x 1.35 m
Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery